

CIVIC EDUCATION
AND
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:
PEAS IN A POD

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CIVIC EDUCATION: PEAS IN A POD

In discussing this subject, one most presume that one precedes the other that is a priori. In reality, a high level of civic engagement springs from a high level of civic education. Therefore, this is where we must begin our examination. The words of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) 1998 on civic education highlight the problem: “The strength of America's constitutional democracy comes largely from the informed, active participation of its citizens, whether voting in an election, spending time on jury duty, volunteering for community service, or simply keeping aware of current affairs. Will the next generation of citizens -- today's students -- have the knowledge, skills, and interest to fulfill their civic responsibilities?” (U.S. Department of Education. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. National Center for Education Statistics. The NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card Highlights, NCES 2000-460. Washington, DC: 1999). (The NAEP is called the nation’s report card, because it is a rigorous test administered throughout the nation.)

This is a key question. Will today’s young citizens measure up to the mark of previous generations in civic education and engagement? The NAEP 1988 study sets out the parameters of the problem. “The strengths

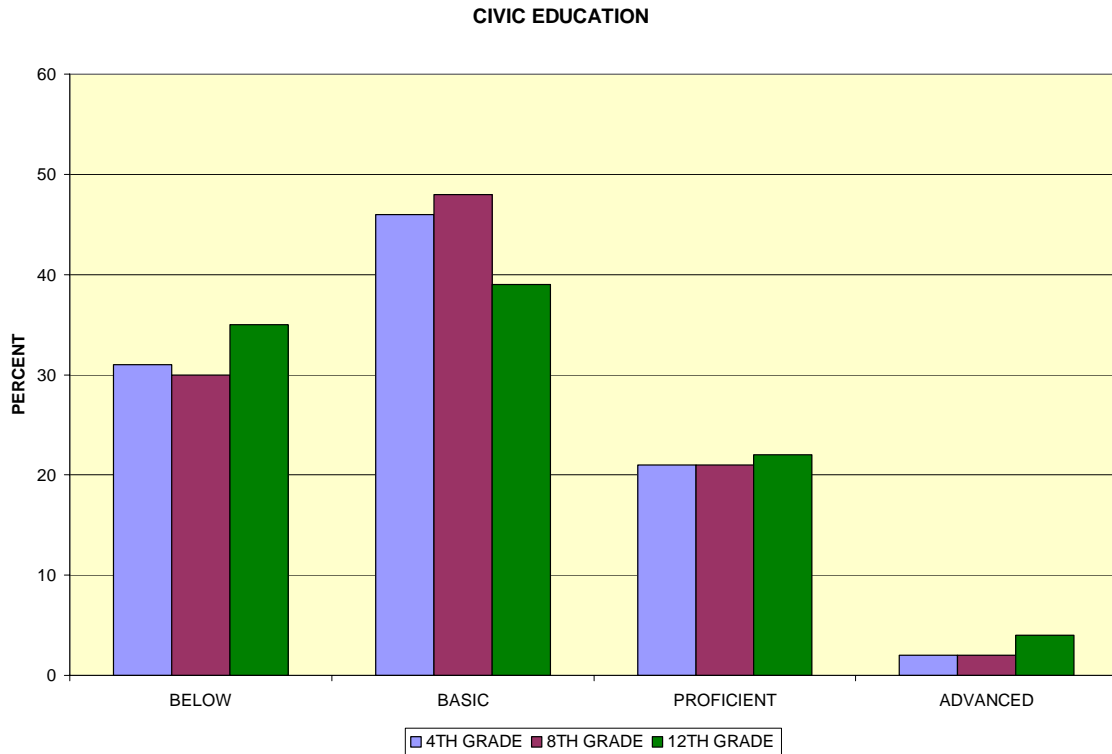
that students should be able to demonstrate can be found in the following fundamental areas:

- a. Civic life, politics and government
 - b. Foundations of the American political system
 - c. How the government established by the Constitution represents the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy
 - d. The relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs.
5. The roles of citizens in American democracy.

Students should be able to demonstrate the skills that enable citizens to use their civic knowledge to respond to the challenges of life in a constitutional democracy.”

And how is the NAEP assessment of civic education structured?

	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 12
Civic life, politics and Govt foundations of America	21%	8%	5%
political system	22%	28%	23%
How Govt represents purposes, values, and principles of American democracy	15%	26%	29%
relationship of U.S. to other nations and world affairs	10%	14%	20%
Citizen role in American Democracy	32%	24%	23%



Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

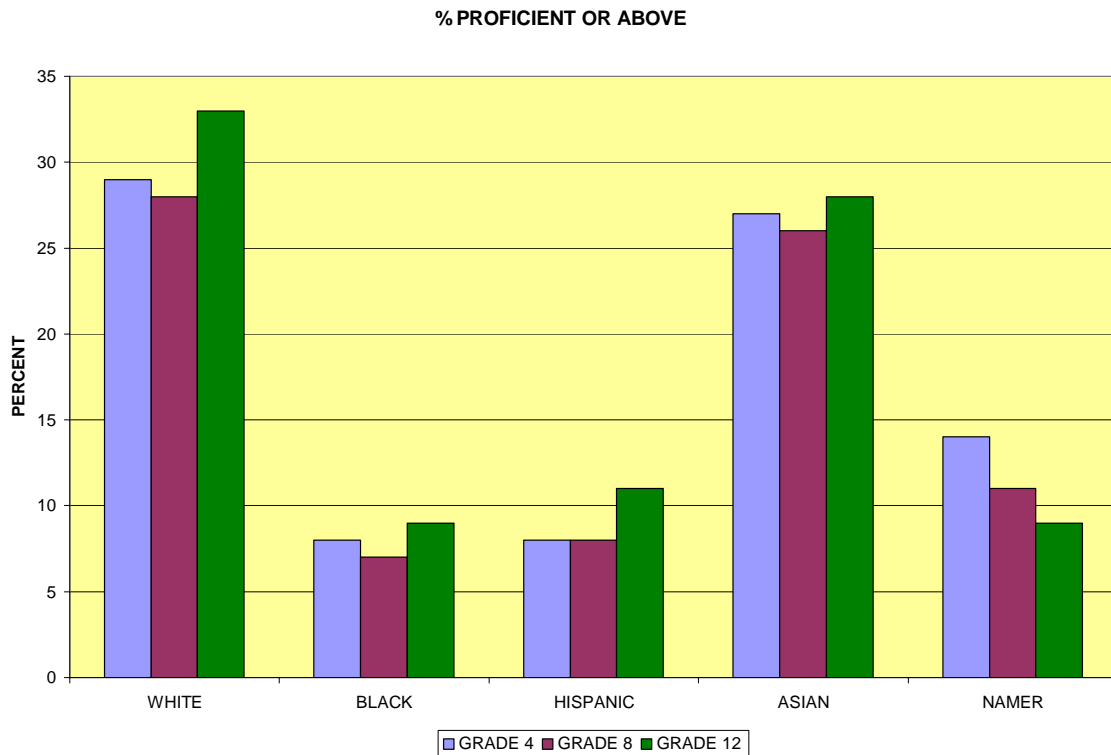
Figure 1
1988 Civic Education Assessment

It is important at this point to clearly define what is meant by below basic level, basic level, proficient level and advanced level:

- **BELOW BASIC**-Little, if any, demonstrated knowledge on the subject.
- **BASIC**- Partial mastery
- **PROFICIENT**-Level representing a standard of adequate knowledge
- **ADVANCED**-Level of knowledge more than adequate. (William Gaston:110)

Slightly less than 25% of student's tests in all grades were ranked as proficient or higher on the assessment. This percent is exceeded by those deemed below even a basic level of knowledge. This is not an encouraging report on today's youth.

There is virtually no difference in gender results in all grades. But there is a wide difference in ethnic/racial testing.

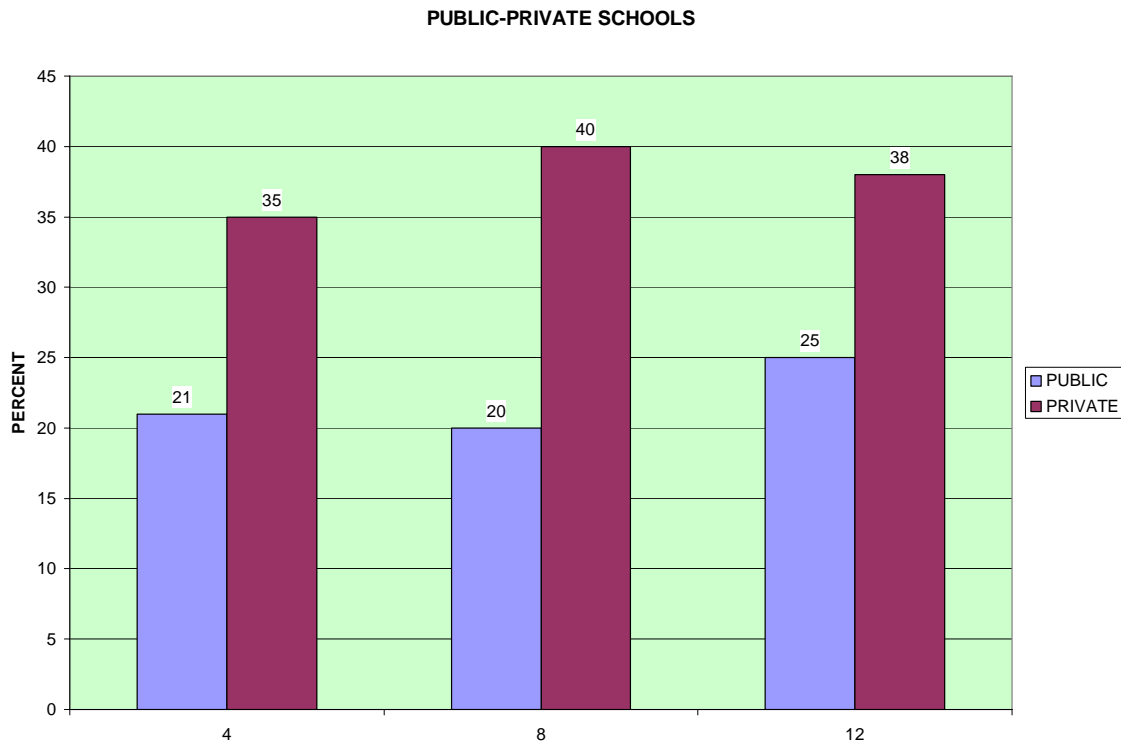


Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

Figure 2
NAEP Civic Education Proficiency
By Race/Ethnicity

One can readily see a wide gap in testing results for proficiency or above scores in the civics assessment. Overall whites show an improvement as do Asians. But whites, blacks and Asians show a slight decline in eighth grade testing; Native Americans show a steady decline by grade level. Hispanics in the 12th grade show an improvement as do blacks, but still lag far behind white and Asian proficiency scores.

Private versus public schools scores can also be displayed.

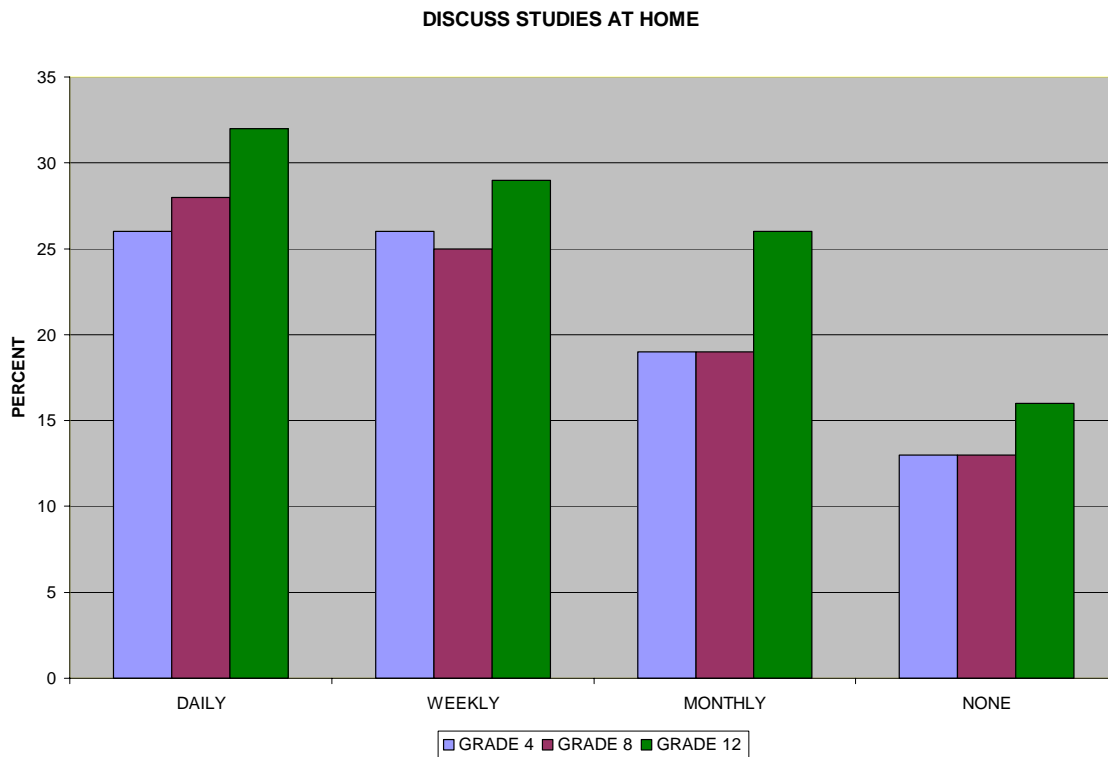


Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

Figure 3
1988 NAEP PUBLIC-PRIVATE SCHOOL
CIVIC EDUCATION PROFICIENCY OR ABOVE

This figure clearly demonstrates that students attending private compared to public schools score much higher on the civic education assessment test. Public schools do made a respectable gain in 12th grade, but still lag behind. In the 8th grade, private school scores are exactly double public schools. But by the 12th grade, this margin has been reduced to 33%. Still, this is a large gap.

One other NAEP comparison of civic education assessment is how often school studies are discussed at home.

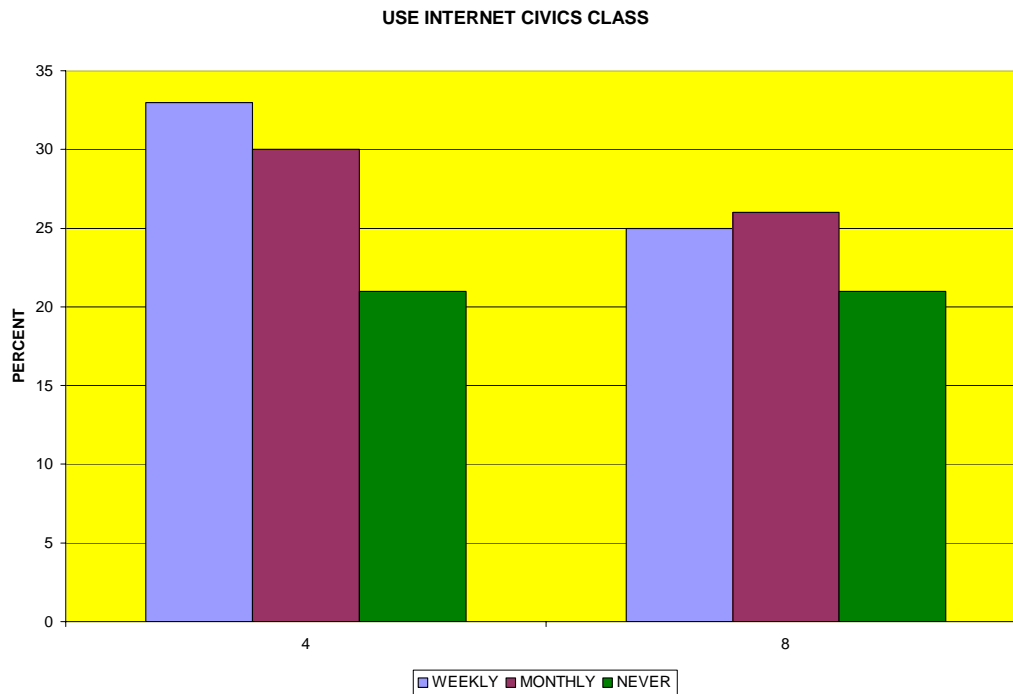


Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

Figure 4
 Studies discussed at home
 Student proficiency or above on civic education assessment

Discussing a student's studies at home daily or even weekly pays dividends compared to rarely or never (the last column). In the 4th grade daily or weekly studies discussion makes little difference, but daily discussion by the 8th and 12th grades really starts to show. But it is also evident that as a child ages, discussion at home of school studies become increasingly important as even a monthly discussion shows improvement of civic education proficiency.

What about access and use of the internet in civics classes? Does this make a big difference?

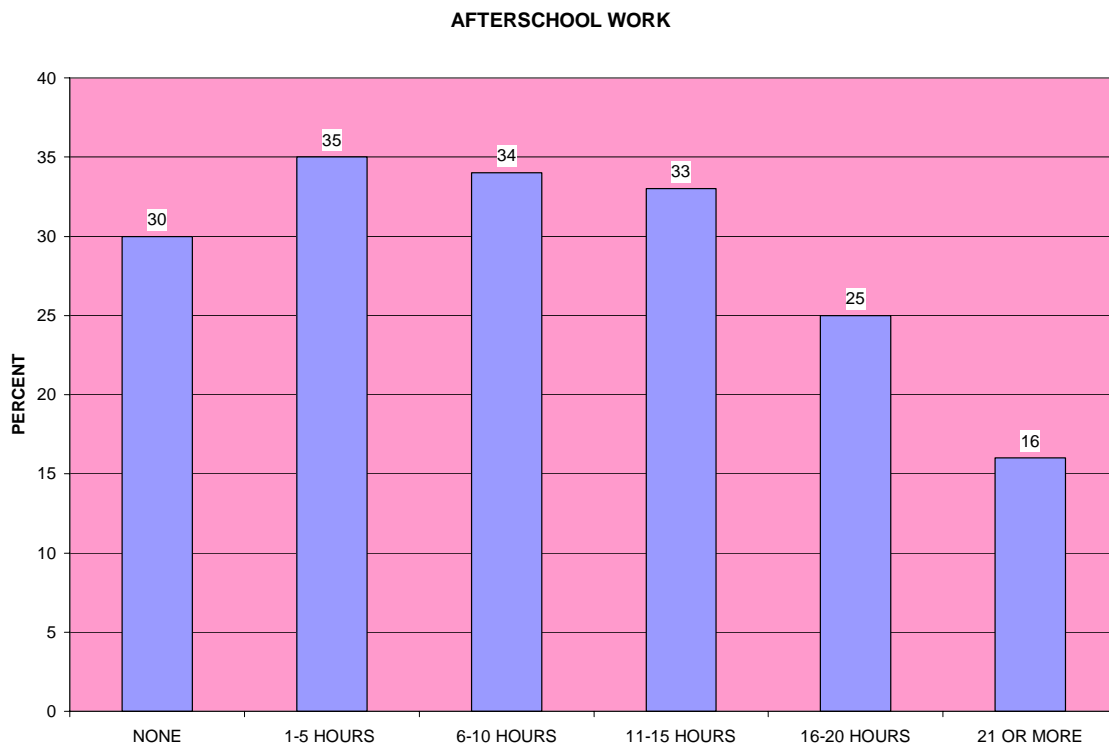


Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

Figure 5
Internet use in Civics class
Percent of proficiency or above

In the 4th grade, access and use of the internet seems to clearly be related to civic assessment at a level of proficient or above on the civics education assessment; however, by the 8th grade this difference seems less clear. In fact, proficiency drops with weekly or monthly usage in civics education classes. One suspects that by the 8th grade students have access to the internet outside the class and in class access becomes less important?

Another measure was whether a student worked at a job for pay after school.

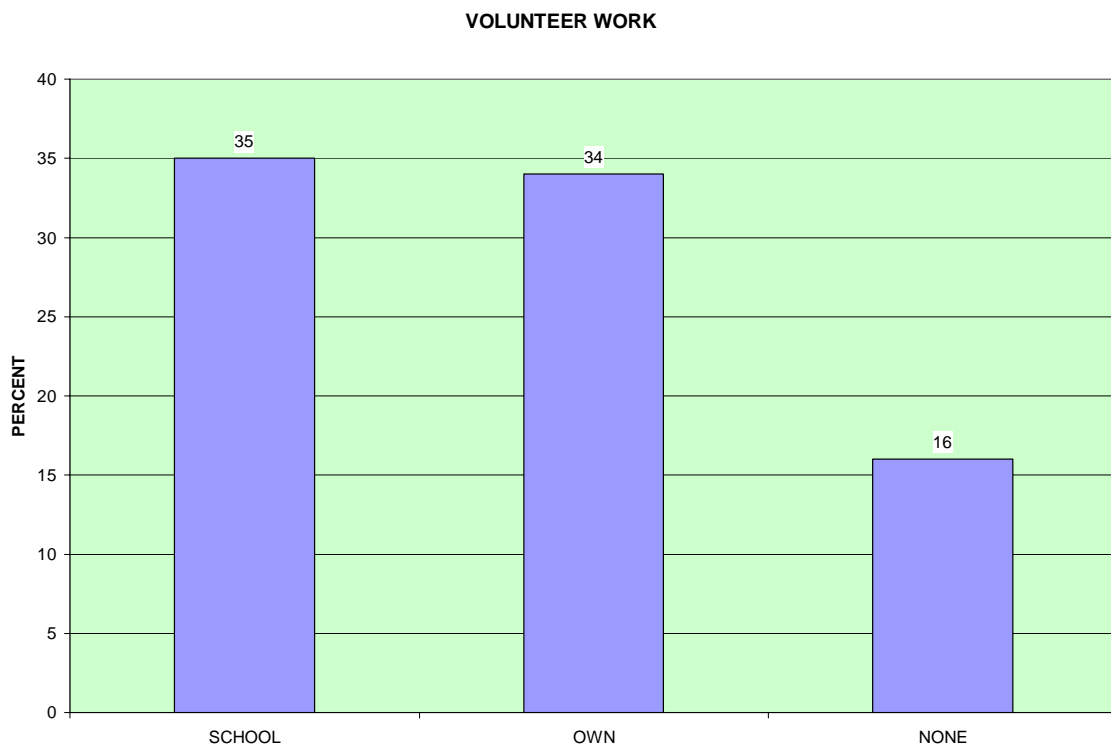


Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

FIGURE 6
AFTER SCHOOL WORK HOURS 12th GRADE STUDENTS
PROFICIENT OR ABOVE

It is clearly evident that some after school work for pay is not injurious in terms of civic education assessment. Working up to 15 hours per week results in greater proficiency compared to not working at all. It is only when work exceeds 15 hours/week that we see deterioration set in rather rapidly. Clearly some work is beneficial, but excessive work is not.

The above data reflects work for pay. But how does volunteer work compare?



Source: 1988 Civic NAEP report

FIGURE 7
VOLUNTEER WORK AND
CIVIC ASSESSMENT PROFICIENCY OR ABOVE

There is clear evidence that volunteering either as part of a school program or on their own volition pays clear dividends compared to students who do not volunteer. In fact, there is a more than 50% difference which is huge and significant.

Thus far we have seen that civic education proficiency or above is relatively low for American students at all grade levels, but we have also seen factors which seem to be related to greater proficiency. Gender is not, but race/ethnicity is. Private school students do better in assessment. Internet access in civic education classes makes more difference in lower grades. Working limited hours/week either for wages or as a volunteer pays large dividends in civic education proficiency. Exposure to the work place, relations and discussions with adults, more life experiences-all flow from this exposure.

Carpini and Keeter maintain that today's college graduates know no more about politics than high school graduates did fifty years ago, and today's high school graduates are no more knowledgeable than were high school dropouts of the past. (as quoted in Galston "Civic Knowledge, Civic Education and Civic Engagement" in Fountain of Youth.)

The NAEP tests pre-college students. Considering that America invests \$325B in undergraduate education (Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), Coming Crisis in Citizenship), one might ask what gains come from this investment. In civic education, there is practically none. In the Fall of 2005, fourteen thousand freshmen and senior students were surveyed at 50 colleges and universities with a 60 multiple-choice questions to measure knowledge in four areas:

- American history
- Government
- American and the world
- The market economy.

Average college senior scores were all “F” as shown below:

Test	Score	Grade
Overall	53.2%	F
American History	58.5%	F
Government	51.4	F
American & World	51.5%	F
Market Economy	50.5	F

What is more shocking is that the average senior at every college scored below 70%, even the cream of the crop. Seniors at 22 of the 50 colleges or

universities scored below 50% and seniors at four of the colleges had average scores below 40%. . The list of colleges and universities and their scores is included as Appendix 1. While ISI will not release the battery of test questions, they have released the subject area of each question and the average correct score for each question. This is included as Appendix 2. The exact form of some of the questions is now in the public domain. Five questions are given as an on-line quiz: Try to see how many you can get correct!

<http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/resources/quiz.aspx>

For those not familiar with ISI-it is a non-partisan, non-profit education organization established in 1953. It primarily works in the field of civic education.

Some of the more shocking findings of the survey:

- 53.4% could not identify the century for the first American colony at Jamestown
- 55.4% did not identify Yorktown as the decisive battle of the American Revolution (28% thought the Civil War Gettysburg battle the correct answer).
- 47.9% could not identify the source of this line; “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...” Declaration of Independence.
- 72.8% could not identify the correct source of “a wall of separation between church and state-Jefferson
- 49.4% did not know the Federalist Papers were written to support the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

- More than half did not know the Bill of Rights explicitly prohibits the establishment of an official religion in the U.S.
- More than 75% could not identify the purpose of the Monroe Doctrine.
- Fewer than half could identify the Baath party as the main source of Saddam Hussein’s political support. Twelve percent thought it come from the communist party and 5.7% chose Israel. (ISI report)

We have seen that the knowledge level of graduating seniors in the NAEP test on civics is low, but surely after four years in college, we should see a giant gain. Overall, there is only a 1.5% increase in average scores.

The table below tells the story:

Test Section	Freshmen	Seniors	Difference
Overall	51.7%	53.2%	1.5%
American History	58.3%	58.5%	0.2%
Government	50.5%	51.4%	0.9%
American & World	49.8%	51.5%	1.7%
Market Economy	46.8%	50.5%	3.7%

American history shows the least gain and the Market Economy the most gain. Still graduating seniors have a lower knowledge level of market economics than any other area.

What is more disheartening is that 16 universities/colleges had negative civic learning-that is, students entering had more knowledge than departing

seniors. And even more disheartening is that among these 16 are some of the highest ranked higher education institutions in the U.S. See Appendix 1.

We might at this point comment on the methodology of this survey. Freshmen and seniors at selected universities were asked identical multiple-choice questions. The goal was to see if there was any gap in knowledge or any observable improvement in knowledge. It was not a longitudinal study of a freshman cohort and then a study of the same cohort as seniors. This would be a more precise measure of learning. But as a crude measure of learning, the study method does the next best thing for a one-time survey-it looks at entry and departure scores.

The study reveals that American's more selective and prestigious universities enroll the best prepared freshmen compared to other universities. But in terms of civic education they are among the worst. This information again is displayed in Appendix 1.

The study did not obtain information about student majors, but did track how many courses the students took in history, government, economics, etc. On average, for each course taken, there was an increase of about one percent in civic learning of the students.

In 1998, the NAEP tests on civic was administered to about 22,000 students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in the nation. Six hundred and seventy grade 4

schools, 697 grade 8 schools and 566 grade 12 schools were surveyed. This past January through March, another NAEP survey on civics was conducted. The results of this survey will be released in early 2007.

Taking the 1998 NAEP and ISI results into consideration, it could be reasonably concluded that the level of civic education of today's generation is probably the worst in modern history. But perhaps this lack of knowledge is being offset by other engagements like political or social engagement?

In looking at civic engagement and American youth, the most recent data used a typology developed by Scott Keeter and his colleagues in 2002 which looked at 19 measures of civic engagement. The CIRCLE study looked at these nineteen plus an additional measure for a total of 20 measures.

- Civic Activities
- Electoral participation
- Use of Political voice

Civic activities consisted of five core activities:

- Volunteering
- Community Problem Solving
- Charity activities
- General fundraising for charities

➤ Group membership

The CIRCLE survey in 2004 looked at 18-25 years olds in four categories:

- Current enrolled college students
- BA degree students, not currently enrolled
- Some College-not currently enrolled
- No college experience

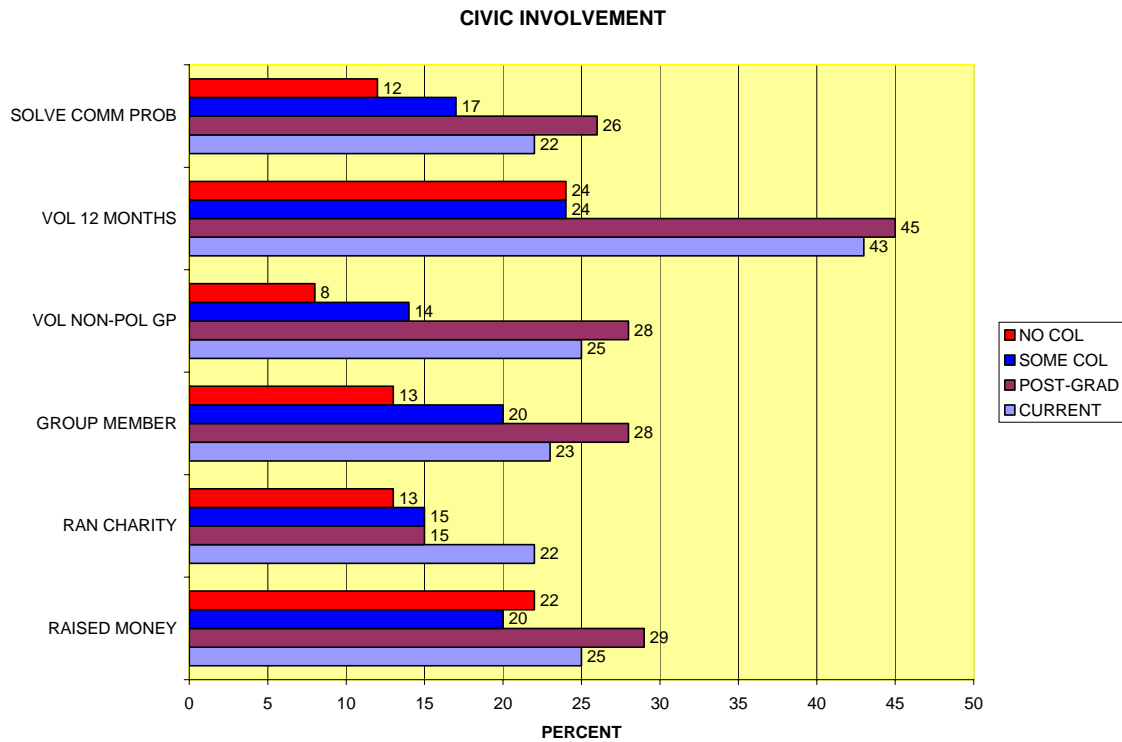


FIGURE 8
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY EDUCATION LEVEL

Volunteering in the last 12 months was the most prevalent activity with 43% of current college students and 45% of BA graduates. Some or no college rates were only 24%. But we should note that even in this highest

category, only a minority of 18-25 years olds are represented. Belonging to at least one group was the next highest category. It is also clear the no or partial college education results in less civic activities with the exception of running, walking or biking for charity.

The survey analyzed gender responses, but did not include data on racial/ethnic responses. Female respondents were more civically involved than males in every category of analysis.

The next major unit of analysis was electoral participation which included the following six measures:

- Regular voting in elections
- Volunteering for political campaigns or candidates
- Persuading others to vote
- Displaying campaign buttons or signs
- Working or contributing money to candidates, parties or organizations
- Member of a political group

One can readily see that the most common activity was persuading others to vote and the least participatory activity was in volunteering in a political campaign. Males were far more active in persuading others in an election, displaying a campaign button or sign and donating money to a

candidate or party, but females were more active in political groups, and regular voting.

Non college education respondents were last in every category, but some college respondents were slightly more responsive than current college enrollees in donating money to a candidate or party (this makes some sense, since the income stream of a current college students is limited which a some college student may be working full time at some job). See Figure 9 below:

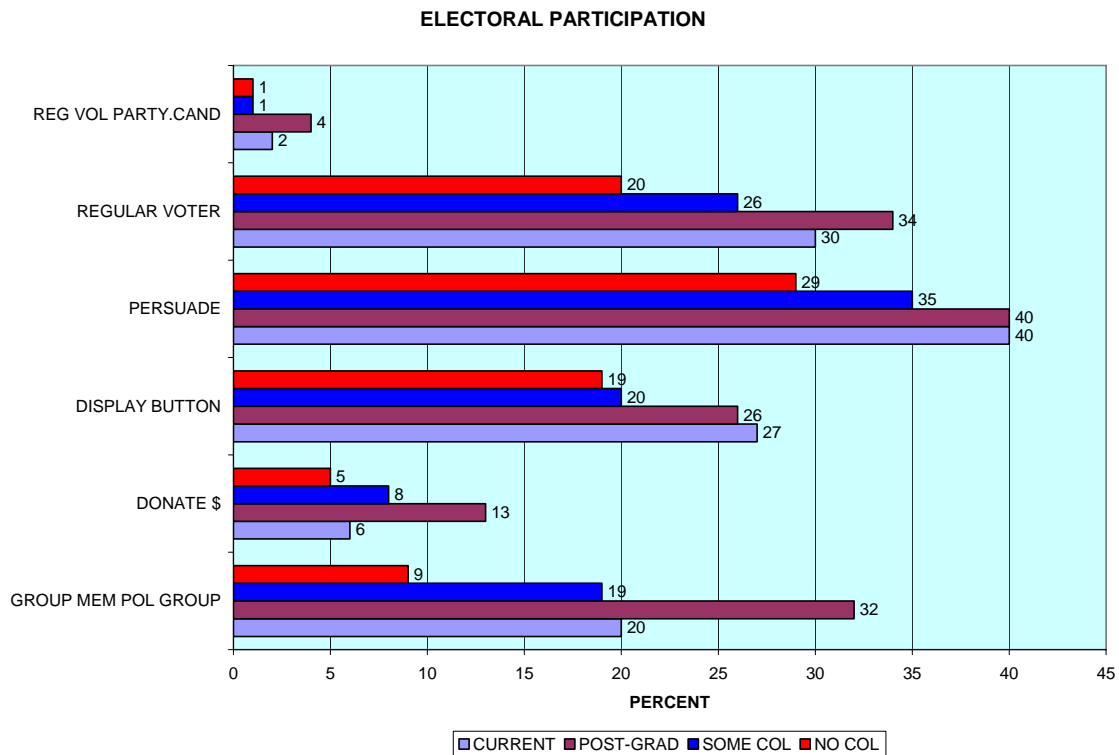


FIGURE 10
ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION BY EDUCATION LEVEL

Nine activities are shown under the broad category of Political Voice:

- Protested (last 12 months)
- Contacted Broadcast media (last 12 months)
- Contacted Print media (last 12 months)
- Contacted an official (last 12 months)
- Canvassed (last 12 months)
- Buycotted (last 12 months)
- Boycotted (last 12 months)
- Signed a paper petition (last 12 months)
- Signed an E-mail petition (last 12 months)

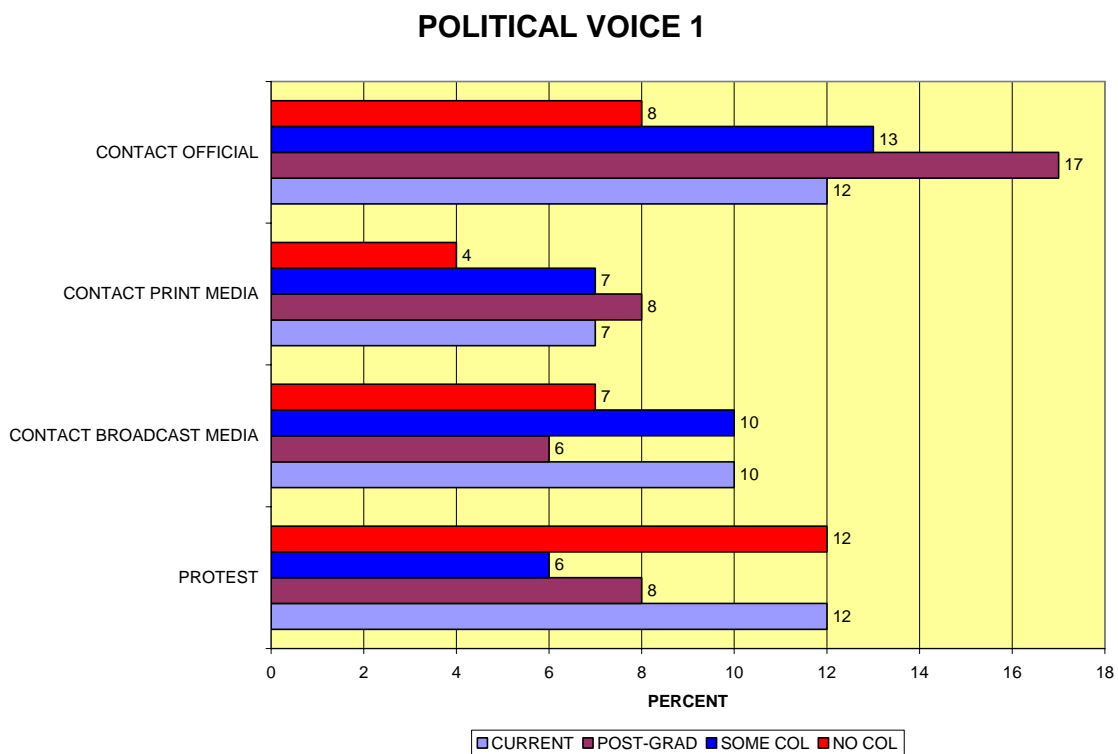


FIGURE 11
POLITICAL VOICE ACTIVITY BY EDUCATION LEVEL

In the display above, contacting a public official is the most common form of using political voice, but is only exercised by a very small percent of students. In protesting, current and no college students are equal participants and in contacting broadcast media current and some college students are the most active.

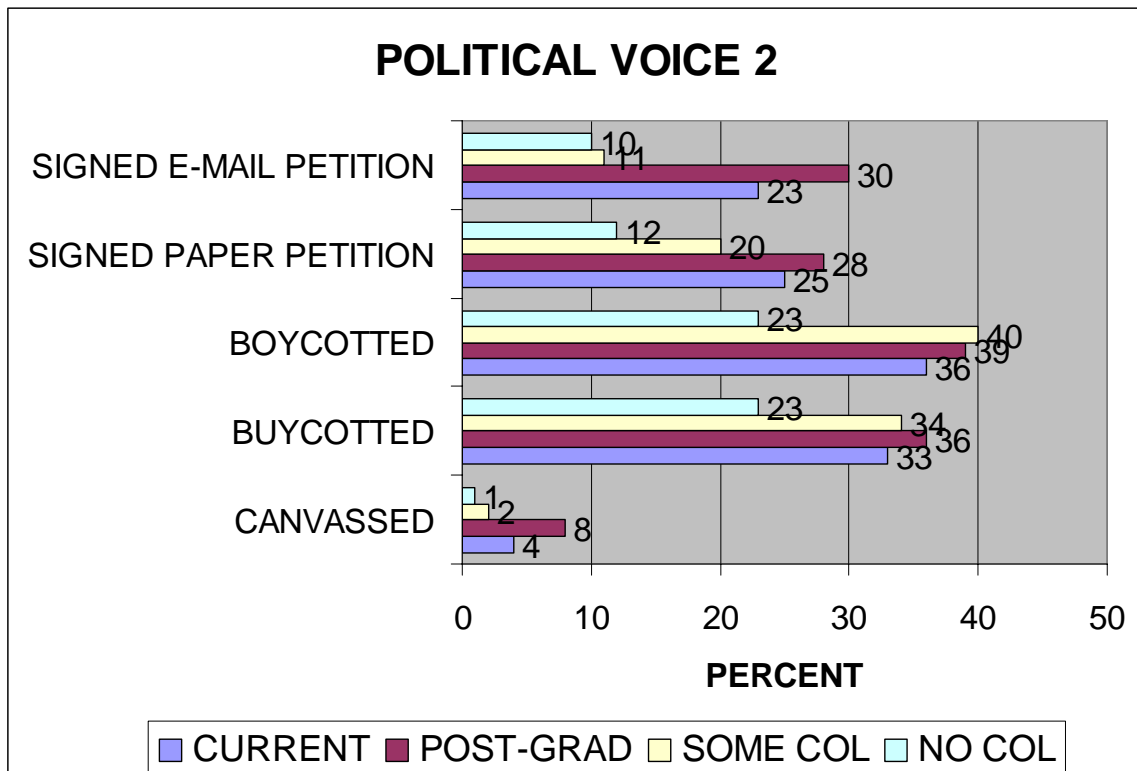


FIGURE 12
 ADDITIONAL POLITICAL VOICE ACTIVITY BY
 EDUCATION LEVEL

In this last graphic we can see two activities that attract the most students interest-boycotting and buycotted. But “no college” education students trail in every comparison.

The survey cited above shows a wide variety of electoral and political voice activity among college age students. But with few exceptions, only a tiny minority of students is involved. These students will, no doubt, will serve as a source of political activists, campaign workers, and even candidates. The rest will be casual voters, more interested in being entertained than educated. Our democracy is maturing and the prospect is not bright.

In summary, there is strong evidence that civic education in K-12 grades is very weak in public schools compared to private schools and that a strong racial/ethnic gap exists in civic education proficiency. Contrary to “common wisdom” working after school or volunteering one’s time does not detract from civic education proficiency as long as it is in moderation.

America’s colleges and universities are not helping much in civic education. ISI results are anemic for higher education.

Without civic knowledge, one is neither equipped nor motivated for civic participation. If we wish to have a thriving, vibrant, healthy democracy, we must insist that our public schools and higher education institutions do their part. The Democracy and Civic Engagement project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities which involves

200 colleges and universities, representing more than 1.7 million students is a step in the right direction. Only more time will tell if it is effective.

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The National Center for Education Statistics. 2000. NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card Highlights

Willaim Gaston, "Civic Knowledge, Civic Education and Civic Engagement" in Fountain of Youth 2007.

APPENDIX 1

RANKING THE COLLEGES

RANK	COLLEGE	FRESHMAN MEAN	SENIOR MEAN	VALUE ADDED
1	RHODES COLLEGE	50.6%	62.2%	+11.6%
2	COLORADO STATE U	40.6%	51.5%	+10.9%
3	CALVIN COLLEGE	49.5%	59%	+9.5 %
4	GROVE CITY COLLGE	59%	68.4%	+9.4 %
5	U OF COLORADO, BOULDER	39.7%	48.6%	+8.9%
6	SPRING ARBOR U	39.5%	47.8%	+8.3%
7	U NEW MEXICO	38.7%	46.9%	+8.2%
8	UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE	40.6%	48.1%	+7.5%
9	FLORIDA MEMORIAL U	24.4%	31.2%	+6.8%
10	CENTRAL CN STATE U	39.1%	44.1%	+5%
11	GEORGE MASON U	50.9%	55.9%	+5%
12	YOUNGSTOWN STATE U	37.6%	42.5%	+4.9%
13	NC CENTRAL U	28.9%	33.7%	+4.8%
14	UTAH STATE U	43.8%	48.3%	+4.5%
15	LYNCHBURG COLLEGE	43.3%	47.3%	+4%
16	CATHOLIC U OF AMER	45.9%	49.1%	+3.2%
17	U MASS, BOSTON	42.5%	45.5%	+3%
18	PRINCETON U	66%	69.8%	+2.8%
19	E. KENTUCKY U	31.4%	34.1%	+2.7%
20	BAYLOR U	47.6%	50.2%	+2.6%
21	W. TEXAS A&M U	41%	43.5%	+2.5%
22	U OF S. ALABAMA	39.7%	41.7%	+2%
23	U OF TEXAS AUSTIN	53.8%	55.8%	+2%
24	WHEATON COLLEGE	59.7%	61.6%	+1.9%
25	HARVARD	67.8%	69.7%	+1.9
26	U OF WASHINGTON	48.3%	50.1%	+1.8%
27	APPALACHIAN STATE U	41.7%	43.4%	+1.7%
28	UNC-CHAPEL HILL	54.9%	56.5%	+1.6%
29	CAPITAL U	44%	45.3%	+1.3
30	AMERICAN U	63.4%	64.4%	1%
31	STANFORD U	62.2%	63.1%	+0.9%
32	U OF WEST FL	42.1%	42.8%	+0.7%
33	WASHINGTON & LEE U	63.6%	63.8%	+0.2%
34	DARTMOUTH COLLEGE	67.9%	68%	+0.1%
NEGATIVE LEARNING				
35	U OF MICHIGAN	52.1%	52%	-0.1%
36	ITHICA COLLEGE	48.8%	48.6%	-0.2%
37	U OF CHICAGO	64.5%	64.2%	-0.3%
38	MIT	63.9%	63.5	-0.4%
39	WILLIAMS COLLEGE	69.1%	68.4%	-0.7%

40	U OF FLORIDA	48.6%	47.8%	-0.8%
41	WOFFORD COLLEGE	49.2%	48.3%	-0.9%
42	UNIVERSITY OF VA	63.7%	62.6%	-1.1%
43	GEORGETOWN	69.1%	67.9%	-1.2%
44	YALE	69.8%	68.3%	-1.5%
45	U OF W. GEORGIA	34.9%	32.9%	-2.0
46	DUKE UNIVERSITY	60.5%	58.3%	-2.3%
47	BROWN UNIVERSITY	62.5%	59.8%	-2.7%
48	CORNELL UNIVERSITY	59.4%	56.1%	-3.3%
49	U OF CA, BERKLEY	60.4%	54.8%	-5.6%
50	JOHN HOPKINS U	61.7%	54.4%	-7.3%

KNOWLEDGE BY QUESTION

#	QUESTION	FRESH%	SENIOR%	GAIN	RANK
1	Jamestown Colony	47.6%	46.6%	-1.0	42
2	The Puritan religious tradition	52.5	51.9	-0.9	41
3	Form of U.S. government	61	60	-1.0	44
4	George Washington founding role	70.3	71.5	+1.2	33
5	The American Revolutionary War	49.8	45.6	-4.2	56
6	The Unalienable Rights in the Declaration	81.8	83	+1.2	33
7	Chronology of major historical Events	53	50.1	-2.9	53
8	Origin of the doctrine of separation Church and state	25.2	27.2	+2	29
9	Outcome of the War of 1812	37.5	34.9	-2.6	51
10	The thought of Abraham Lincoln	65.7	65.7	0.0	39
11	Timing of the Civil War	60.8	63.7	+2.8	24
12	The New Deal	80.8	83.4	+2.8	28
13	Reconstruction	44.7	42.1	-2.6	51
14	Woman's Suffrage	59.4	58.4	-1.0	44
15	Roe v. Wade	60.2	65.8	+5.5	11
16	Brown v. Board of Education	79.1	82.2	+3.1	22
17	World War II	69.7	72.6	+2.8	24
18	Declaration of Independence	47.6	47.9	+0.1	37
19	Plato's Republic	25.7	28.9	+3.2	20
20	The Concept of Representative Democracy	73.6	77.1	+3.5	19
21	The Federalist Papers	56.3	50.6	-5.7	57
22	Concept of the Separation of Powers	70.8	75.5	+5.1	14
23	Marbury v Madison	54.4	44.8	-9.6	60
24	Federalism defined	49.4	47.6	-1.8	49
25	Common law	48.5	56.9	+8.4	3
26	John Locke and Declaration of Independence	73.3	72.3	-1.0	4
27	Founders understanding of moral and political knowledge	39.2	39.1	-0.1	40
28	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	79.9	83.1	+3.2	21
29	Classical thought & relativism	24.9	30.5	+5.6	13
30	The Bill of Rights	48.1	49	+0.9	36
31	The nature of society	22.5	22.7	+0.2	38
32	Thomas Paine and Common Sense	74.2	72.6	-1.6	48
33	Enumerated Powers	33.4	29.7	-3.7	55
34	President Washington's foreign policy	47.9	38.6	-9.3	59

35	Monroe Doctrine	31.3	23.3	-8	58
36	Traditional just war criteria	14.4	17.1	+2.7	27
37	NATO	46.2	44.7	-1.5	47
38	Alternate forms of Govt	47.7	53.3	+5.6	11
39	Alexis de Tocqueville (Democracy in America)	42.5	47.5	+4.8	16
40	The United Nations	64.2	69	+4.8	17